

THE PARADIGMATIC SHIFT: FROM SUBORDINATION TO EMANCIPATION IN RAJAM KRISHNAN *LAMPS IN THE WHIRLPOOL*

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this paper is to explore the character of a Woman Girija in *Lamps in the Whirlpool* which was written by Rajam Krishnan is a major Tamil writer. The *Lamps in the Whirlpool* translated from the *Suzhalil Mithakkum Deepangal*. The title of the novel *Lamps in the Whirlpool*, the 'lamps' symbolizes the situation of women in the family as well as the 'whirlpool' indicates the inconvenience that are faced by women. Specifically, the author gives a description of feminism and the orthodox regulations of the Brahmin community in this novel. She gives an emphasis to 'madi rules' and how Brahmin women are endured by that 'madi' rules. The present paper divulges how the central character, Girija moves violently in an orthodox Brahmin family to maintain her authority in her home and how she comes out by violating the convention in the orthodox parameter.

KEYWORDS: Predicament, Orthodox, Submissive, Subjugated, Emancipation

INTRODUCTION

Rajam Krishnan, born in 1925 in Musiri, Trichy District in Tamil Nadu is a major Tamil writer. Her works represent the lives of women in Tamil Nadu, India, particularly about the Brahmin women, well -expressed in a realist style and language. Mostly, her features of writing are to interlink with tradition and modernity. She is not able to come to stipulations with what she observes to be the firm plight of women in society, irrespective of whether they are traditional or modern. She once mentioned in an interview, "It is a shame that the suffering women underwent in my day dog them even now". Krishnan's works articulate her agony at the way injustices are continued with one after another form. Her novels and short stories have been translated into diverse Indian languages and English. As a writer with a social conscience, the author could not but raise her voice against the injustice done to women either within the family or outside its circle, by men and women. She is a receiver of *NewYork Herald Tribune* International Award in 1950 for a short story; Sahitya Akademy Award in 1973; Soviet Land Nehru Award in 1975. She has been privileged with a number of other awards such as Kalaimagal Award in 1953 and Thiru. Vi. Ka. Award in 1991.

Lamps in the Whirlpool was first published as *Suzhalil Mithakkum Deepangal* in 1987. *Suzhalil Mithakkum Deepangal* renders the great effort of an educated young woman in an orthodox Brahmin family. She ascertains her way and come out of its anesthetizing everyday life to find her precise emancipation by thinking that not to be under the control of uncomfortable demands and margins. Rajam Krishnan's husband Rama Krishnan shared his views in the obituary column as:

Her writings on issues and labourers were lively and explained the actual condition of the victims. Apart from

writings on many issues, she also took part in several agitations to give voice for the oppressed. (Times of India)

All her novels spotlight on feminists outlooks in its treatment and argument with eloquent language. If a woman surrender her life and wishes for the family and society then she is considered as an angel and worshipped like anything in the world. Otherwise, she is neglected as atrocious and demonic figure. Rajam Krishnan particular points out about the middle class Brahmin community in the novel. In fact, she confronts predicament of the novel in which the atrocities committed in the name of the family to the protagonist Girija.

By and large, many people have knowledge of education, but they are left unquestioned to follow the traditions and culture of their ancestors. Particularly, in general, women are compelled to follow the rituals. In every community women are expected to follow the rituals and customs. Likewise, The Protagonist Girija is a representative middle class girl, though she is educated but as a married woman she performs all her duties alike a Hindu wife. She has been educated, well to perform as a submissive wife and daughter-in-law is the only intention of a woman's life. She is a post-graduate and has worked as a teacher in a school for eight years. She wedded Swaminathan, who is skilled and fit set in life. Bernard Shaw represents about the relationship husband and wife as:

Man and wife do not, as a rule, live together; they only breakfast together, dine together and sleep in the same room. In most cases the women know nothing of the man's working life and he knows nothing of her working life (He calls it her home life). (11)

From this point of view, husband and wife both should be mutually understand and share their views and feelings such as: good and bad, development of the family, financial status of the home, and children's education with them. They should be given self-respect to each other more than love. If it happens so then their life would be filled and continued with the stream of love forever. But here, the protagonist lost her identity and self-respect from their family members. In this novel, the title symbolizes Girija as a 'lamp' and her problems as 'whirlpool'.

As they belong to Brahmin family Girija is married to Swaminathan and beget three children Kavitha, Charu and Bharat. She is an educated as well as employed woman. But soon after their marriage, she is not permitted to exhibit her talents and to express her personal views and ideas according to her desire. She obtains the traditional role and serves to her mother-in-law and engaged in her daily household tasks in order to obey words of elders, but she is treated like a slave and unrecognized personality. Her physical and mental stress is not considered, due respect is not provided and priority is not given by her family members at any place. Girija faces inconvenience because of her mother in law:

Kavi and Charu ran naked like slum children. If they wore clothes and touched her, she had to bathe again before cooking! She had been so ashamed of their appearances, especially when friends and students visited her. (11)

Her mother-in-law symbolizes the unkindness that woman commits on womanhood. After bearing two daughters and a son, and helping her mother-in-law with uncompromising dedication for seventeen years she recognizes the meaninglessness of her life. She is traumatized to know that she has been subjugated both by her husband and mother-in-law.

Girija's mother-in-law selfishly makes her observe strict rules of austerity and piety described in Tamil as "madi" and "aacharam". According to the Hindu law, as a housewife one should take early bath before entering the kitchen. She must wash night clothes daily. Particularly, widows must wear narmadi. Girija follows this 'madi rules' since seventeen years as per her mother-in-laws order. Girija does not like those rules, even though she follows it for her mother-in-law.

Nevertheless, her mother-in-law does not help Girija in any way. Instead of that she is seated free from all her responsibilities. Her foremost job is to supervise her daughter in law Girija only. Swaminathan pays his attention only on his business. He does not show any kind of support or love or affection on her. He denies staying or listening to her words and pretends as if he is busy with his work. Girija always entangled with her household works and runs like a machine without ego. She feels that everything is sacrificed only for the sake of her husband and children's welfare. Rajam Krishnan portrays the female character Girija as an example that is how the female children are to be treated and not to be in their family. For example, Girija has two female children (Kavitha, Charu) who are less considered but vital preference is allotted to the male child Bharat. Here, the practice of Indian culture and tradition is well expressed.

Her husband is the embodiment of callousness. He is totally insensitive to the feelings of his wife. One day, in male egoistic anger he throws down the plate when the food is not to his liking. He humiliates her and goes away. His crude behaviour shocks her and rouses her dormant sense of self-respect. All along Girija had been a sufferer of the austere rules of orthodoxy. She excruciatingly thinks about how her children are starved of the joys of being embraced and fondled by their mother from a tender age, as it would defy the "madi".

She is awakened by the talk of 'consciousness raising' by Ratna, her husband's niece. Ratna incites Girija's consciousness by her talk "I cannot bear to see a talented person like you trapped in a life ruled by blind orthodoxy. The madi concept is quite outdated and only a means to torture people". Ratna may be taken as the representative of Rajam Krishnan. Her sense of right and wrong finds a voice through Ratna. The wrongs done to women in the name of "madi" have extremely impaired her. Ratna tells Girija: What a disgrace! They treat you like a worm and make you work like a machine. Harmony is achieved only when all the notes are in perfect accord. A single note, however melodious, does not create harmony. Even though the novel convention with the Brahminical background and its accepted belief, it also suggests the illustration of the Indian woman and her predicament caught up in obligations towards her family. Rajam Krishnan is aggrieved to perceive that the mainstream of the Indian women has no sense of self identity at all. They lose their self identity after the marriage ceremony. Edification does not give any legalization of their life. They are converted into sacrificial goats in the formal procedure of administering the family.

On the other hand, the author tries to explore, how an ignored child gets into the wrong path. Krishnan introduces a character named Runo, who is ignored by her parents. She lost her mother and father married another lady. So, no one is either to question or answer to her. In this case she becomes a drug addict and a drunkard. At last she commits suicide because of her boyfriend who cheated her. Rajam Krishnan through the character Ratna a granddaughter of Girija's mother-in-law symbolizes and presents the view on feminism. She stresses the need and importance of self-respect and identity that she fails to think about it. Ratna inquires Girija "Tell Girija, you are imprisoned in the four dark walls of this tiny kitchen where your education and skills are wasted. Girija, are you happy with this life? (12)". The word of Ratna makes the protagonist Girija realize and analyze the place given by her husband and mother-in-law. After realizing the situation she could understand that she is treated like a worm without any respect and recognition. Eventually, Girija decides to come out of that mechanical life so without giving prior information to anyone she steps out her home to find some relief on the banks of the Ganga and reach Rishikesh Ashram. Before her departure from her home, she removes her 'diamond ring, earring and nose ring' that removal which is symbolized as the 'bondage of slavery'. Moreover, Girija removes her 'Mangal sutra' instead of that she wears a chain because it is made by her own cost.

Rajam Krishnan in her real life also represented the importance courage and dynamic attitude of the woman. According to Manjula, who works at the old age home, recalled the days she had spent with the veteran:

“We had seen her only with a pen and a notebook. She wrote many poems, especially Savithri Vaithi, founder of Vishranthi. We used to read all of her poems after our morning prayers,” she said, adding that the writer felt very lonely and that she would often be seen crying in her room. Her relatives used to call and speak to Rajam Amma on the phone. “She always advised me to be bold and that women should always be strong. (Deccan Chronicle)

She meets a sacred widow in Haridwar who has provoked to challenge the society after her husband's death-Girija gives explanation about her state of affairs to the woman. She gives advice Girija to think over and take life in her hands according to your view and act with lucidity. She returns home bravely with a sense of enlightenment, after four days Girija's husband and mother-in-law lay the blame on her with disloyalty and command her to leave the house. Girija disgusted and goes to Ratna, who is affianced in feminist studies in Delhi University. Ratna and her friends give her place of safety and take concern of her as if she were an offended bird. Girija looks for employment with a nun who runs a home for expatriate children. Her apprehension now is to see that her daughters are not ruined by the family routine

CONCLUSIONS

Eventually, I would like to share my opinion that Men and women are equal and should be given mutual respect. *Lamps in the Whirlpool* unquestionably represent the life of women in the contemporary age of Rajam Krishnan. Women have no rights to express their thoughts or feelings during that period, but now are entangled in all fields. Once upon a time, man treats a woman like a slave. But now that condition is gradually changing. They partake in all departments and prove their talent. Women have the same feelings as same as men like, passion, friendship and so on. Always a woman sacrifices her life for others. For instance, in her childhood, she lives for her parents. In her later life, she lives for her husband and children. At the old age, she lives for her grandchildren. So, the life of man is incomplete without a woman in the family. In my point of view, Man and woman are two parts of the same soul. Hence, they cannot live without each other.

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